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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5284
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE PRIORITY 0025
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS CAIRO 001499

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [KDEM](#) [KMPI](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: IBN KHALDUN CENTER CONTINUES TO PUSH REFORM IN
EGYPT

REF: A. CAIRO 1487 (NOTAL)

[B](#). CAIRO 1362 (NOTAL)

[C](#). CAIRO 1283 (NOTAL)

[D](#). 2006 CAIRO 6600 (NOTAL)

Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

Summary

[1](#). (SBU) Under the leadership of Egyptian-American sociologist Saad Eddin Ibrahim (SEI), the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies (IKC) continues to play a central role in advocating political reform in Egypt. Through weekly seminars in Cairo, conferences and workshops, and through SEI's op-eds in Egypt's independent press, as well as periodic forays into the western media, the IKC continues to play a leading role in shaping the debate about political reform in Egypt. SEI also continues to advocate for political reform in Egypt through his participation in various international democracy fora, such as upcoming human rights and democracy conferences in Doha and Prague. End summary.

Advocacy in Egypt Continues

[2](#). (SBU) Despite concerns of many in the opposition community that the GOE is circumscribing the space for political debate, IKC continues to advocate strongly for political reform. At a May 20 reception for a visiting delegation of U.S. academics from the Washington-based International Center for Nonviolent Conflict attended by poloff, SEI criticized the "Mubarak regime" on a range of issues including: the imprisonment of former president Anwar Sadat's nephew, Tala'at Sadat, for accusing the Egyptian military, and then-Vice President Mubarak, of involvement in his uncle's 1981 assassination (ref D); the April closure of an independent labor organization (ref C); and reported persecution of Egyptian bloggers (ref A). Self-described "labor activist" Ali Al-Badry attended the event used it as a platform to make provocative criticisms of the GOE (ref B). IKC also recently held a workshop and media event for representatives of Sinai Bedouin tribes to voice their grievances that GOE security and development policies in the Sinai discriminate against the Bedouin. (Note: IKC is the beneficiary of democracy grants from both MEPI and USAID. The MEPI funds support general IKC operations, publishing, and workshops. The USAID funding is for specific project on building tolerance within and among civic groups. End note.)

SEI Continues to Criticize Egypt Abroad

13. (SBU) SEI continues to work for Egyptian democracy in various international fora. In late May, he, along with leading independent judge Hisham Bastiwisi and intellectual Tarek Heggy, will travel to Doha for the "Second Forum on Democracy and Political Reforms in the Arab World." SEI told us that the Forum will conclude with the announcement of an Arab Democracy Foundation, which he said will be funded by a ten-million-dollar grant from the government of Qatar, to support Arab civil society and democracy organizations. SEI also confirmed that he plans to travel to Prague for the June 5-6 Democracy and Security conference, hosted by the Prague Institute for Security Studies (and which will reportedly be the venue for a speech by President Bush).

Comment

14. (SBU) SEI's outspoken criticism of the GOE, and his domestic and international efforts to bolster the cause of political reform in Egypt, have continued to position him as one of Egypt's leading dissident voices. Despite being tarnished by ad-hominem attacks in the nationalist press (e.g., as a "foreign agent"), and despite a growing consensus that political reform in Egypt has stalled, SEI's activism continues to play a leading role in the debate about political reform in Egypt.
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